

Marine PFC Wilbur Martin sets up a TPS-21 air search radar atop "Suicide Ridge" on the perimeter at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

force included many of the destroyers and cruisers that had put to sea during the previous days, as well as the *Essex* ASW group, and a logistic force of two oilers, an ammunition ship, and two destroyers.

As war clouds gathered, Admiral Dennison took action to strengthen Naval Base, Guantanamo, perched on a vul-



LC Geography and Map Division



A map of the Caribbean Basin in the early 1960s. The quarantine lines were both located east of the Bahamas and north of Puerto Rico, in the upper center of the map. The carrier task force (Task Force 135) operated in the waters around Jamaica.





nerable few acres of land near the southeastern tip of Cuba. The U.S. Navy had operated from "GITMO" since acquiring the former coaling station from Spain in 1898. The garrison consisted of a relatively small force of three Marine rifle companies, backed by limited artillery and air support. Navy bluejackets ashore, organized into additional rifle companies after the Bay of Pigs, supported the main line of resistance.

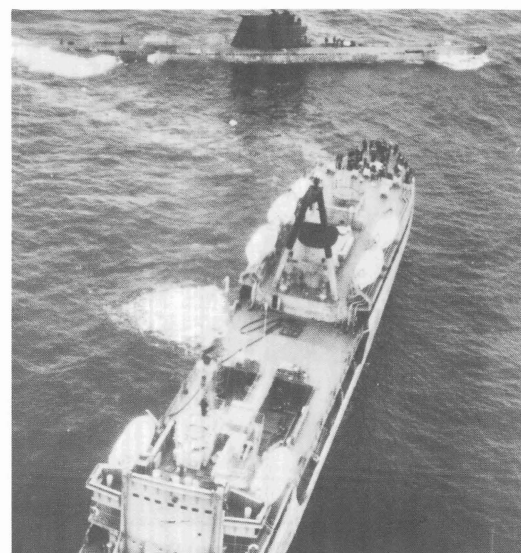
Seabees from Naval Mobile Construction Battalions 4 and 7 manned perimeter positions and served 81 mm mortars, and at least forty Cubans from the base work force volunteered to serve as "second man" on police patrols of the facility. Still, the defenders of Guantanamo, commanded by Rear Admiral Edward J. O'Donnell, would be hard pressed to hold the base if Castro sent strong ground forces against it.

Brigadier General William R. Collins, USMC, had arrived on 20 October to take



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**Top:** Marine infantry from one of the two battalion landing teams airlifted by Air Force C-135 transports to Leeward Point air facility prepare to reinforce other Marines and sailors manning the perimeter at Guantanamo. **Middle:** Navy nurses, on the staff of Guantanamo Naval Hospital, shared the dangers of service at this American outpost on the southern end of Cuba. **Bottom:** On 22 October, U.S. naval patrol planes operating over the broad Atlantic from their air facility in the Azores discovered the rendezvous of a Soviet Zulu-class submarine and the tanker *Terek*.



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A Navy bluejacket helps Guantanamo dependents disembark from USNS *Upshur* at Norfolk, Virginia. In one day, 22 October, four Navy ships evacuated the 2,400 dependents from the threatened base in Cuba.

who soon were the only American women on the base.

As the Marine and Navy combatants came ashore, civilian dependents headed in the other direction. Male hospital patients, women, and children moved to the base air facility and the piers for transportation to Norfolk. Seaplane tender *Duxbury Bay* (AVP 38), tank landing ship *Desoto County* (LST 1171), stores ship *Hyades* (AF 28), and transport USNS *Upshur* embarked the majority of evacuees from Guantanamo. By 1630 on the evening of 22 October, all four ships had cleared the harbor.

Meanwhile, Admiral Denison ordered all attack submarines in the Atlantic Fleet to load for wartime operations and to disperse to waters north of Charleston. In Washington, Admiral Anderson asked the Canadian, British, and several Latin American navies for help locating Soviet ships and submarines in the Atlantic.

Also on that momentous day, the Navy forwarded to Washington worrisome information. Navy patrol planes flying from Lajes in the Azores spotted the Soviet tanker *Terek* refueling a Zulu-class submarine in nearby waters.

At an EXCOM meeting that day, the CIA informed the

charge, under O'Donnell, of the ground forces at Guantanamo. The next day, Air Force Military Air Transport Service planes reinforced the base with Marine BLT 2/1. On the 22nd, Amphibious Squadron 8 put another Marine contingent, BLT 2/2, ashore. The amphibious ships immediately left for Morehead City, North Carolina, to embark another Marine infantry battalion. Subsequent reinforcement

would bring in another BLT and Battery C of the 3rd Marine Light Anti-Aircraft Missile Battalion equipped with Hawk missiles. Tragically, an Air Force C-135 transport delivering ammunition to the base crashed, killing the crew. The airlift also brought in Navy medical teams to augment the base hospital staff. That staff included ten members of the Navy Nurse Corps—led by Commander Dorothy Eaton—

president of the submarine contact and brought to the meeting the most recent aerial photos of Cuba. Art Lundahl informed the group that four of the MRBM sites appeared to be fully operational and that missiles could be fired on six to eight hours' notice. Work also continued at a rapid pace at the other missile sites. This intelligence only strengthened Kennedy's determination to bring matters to a head.

At 1900 on 22 October, the Joint Chiefs set Defense Condition 3 for all U.S. forces worldwide. Polaris submarines moved to their launch points. SAC B-52s and other bombers, fully armed with nuclear bombs, went on alert at dispersal fields in the United States and overseas. SAC also fueled and readied for launching over 100

ICBMs. All these weapons were designated to strike targets in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. Finally, as a precaution against "rash actions by the Cubans," the Atlantic Command scrambled twenty-two U.S. fighters over bases in Florida.

As U.S. forces went on high alert, an unsmiling Kennedy looked into television cameras in the Oval Office of the White House and told the American public that he possessed "unmistakable evidence" of Soviet offensive missiles in Cuba and that he considered these weapons a threat to the security of the entire Western Hemisphere. The president condemned Soviet denials about the presence of offensive weapons in Cuba as false statements. Of great portent, he announced that the U.S. govern-

ment insisted the missiles be withdrawn or eliminated. He added that the U.S. Navy was placing a "strict quarantine" on all offensive weapons shipments to Cuba.

Kennedy implied that severe additional actions would be taken if the Soviets "continued offensive military preparations." Significantly, he warned the Soviets that Cuban-based nuclear missiles fired at any country in the Americas would be considered an attack on the United States and would cause "a full retaliatory" strike against the Soviet Union. The president concluded that this "difficult and dangerous" stand would require the support, sacrifice, and patience of the American people.

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As other U.S. sea, air, and ground forces increased their readiness for war, the nuclear-powered carrier *Enterprise* (CVAN 65) and the fully armed AD-6 Skyraiders of her Attack Squadron 65 prepared to launch strikes against targets in Cuba.

